

**The Advantage of Being Jewish, Part 1**

Scripture: Romans 3:1-4

Code: 45-24

We're going to look at the third chapter of Romans. It is the special joy and privilege that we share together here at Grace Church to study the Bible. We are not interested in the wisdom of men, we are interested in the truth of God. And He has revealed His truth to us in the pages of holy Scripture. We've been studying His Word for many years in this place and the more we study it the more thrilled we become at its truth.

One of the great books, one of the great epistles in the Scripture is the epistle written by Paul to the church at Rome known to us as the book of Romans. Now this is a marvelous book because it presents to us the central message of the Christian faith. And so with a great amount of joy and anticipation we have been studying it and shall continue to do so.

We find ourselves this evening looking at the first eight verses of chapter 3. And you'll notice that verse 1 begins with a question, "What advantage then hath the Jew?" And that's really what we want to see as we look at these eight verses tonight. What is the advantage of being Jewish? Or is there an advantage? For that's the question being posed.

If you look at the picture historically and you trace the story of the Jew, you might conclude that there was little or no advantage at all. Theirs is a sad saga of struggle, of war, captivity and death. They have been hated, persecuted, slandered, imprisoned, slaughtered and this repeatedly through their history. And yet they live on almost defiantly as an indestructible seed. Today rebuilding their small piece of land in the center of the world, they are a noble people made even more noble by their struggles.

But looking at the story of the Jew historically, it would seem that there was little advantage to being Jewish. They were slaves in Egypt for over 400 years under the bondage of Pharaoh who were given the most menial tasks and also they were given circumstances which made those tasks even more difficult. When they were dispossessed from Egypt they wandered in the desert for 40 years until an entire generation of them died off in the wilderness without ever having a home. When they finally entered into the land of Canaan, they had to save themselves from the destruction of the surrounding peoples who constantly attacked them both religiously, morally and in warfare. They were slaughtered and taken captive finally by the Assyrians first and then the Babylonians. From the Assyrian captivity they never returned and from the Babylonian captivity it was 70 years before a remnant began to come back.

After returning from the captivity in Babylon, they set out to rebuild their land from the rubble and were mocked and harassed and hindered and unaided in their efforts. They were dominated by the Greek Antiochus Epiphanes when they were under Greek rule and he took liberties to desecrate their religion, desecrate their priesthood, desecrate their holy place, quell their rebellions by slaughtering many of them. Their babies were massacred by Herod. Their land was oppressed by Roman legions. They were utterly devastated under the power of Rome.

In 70 A.D. the city of Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus Vespasian the great general of the Roman army. One point one million, according to Josephus were murdered, slaughtered. One hundred thousand bodies of the Jews were thrown over the wall in some kind of sport. Two years before that the Gentiles of Caesarea slew 20 thousand Jews and sold thousands more of them into slavery. In a single day the inhabitants of Damascus cut the throats of ten thousand Jews. In the actual siege itself there was devastation beyond description in the city of Jerusalem. One hundred thousand remaining fugitives from that sacking of the city were sold into slavery. Many more died in the gladiator games sponsored by Rome.

In 115 A.D. the Jews of Cyrene, Egypt, Cyprus and Mesopotamia rose up against Rome and tried to defeat Rome and were unsuccessful and so Hadrian the Emperor destroyed 985 towns in Palestine and slew at least 600 thousand men. More perished through starvation, through disease and through fire. So many were sold as slaves that their price dropped to that of a horse. The legal code of Theodocious(?), who was the emperor of Rome around 380 A.D. contained ideas of Jewish inferiority and the ideas of Theodocious and Jewish inferiority permeated all of western society and western law in the centuries to follow.

For two centuries they were oppressed under the Byzantines. Heroclitus(?) banished them from Jerusalem in 628 and endeavored to exterminate them again. Leo the Assyrian in around 723 A.D. gave them the choice between Christianity and banishment. When the first crusade was launched in 1096 to recapture the holy places from the Ottoman Turks, the crusaders entered the Jewish settlement of Ansuan(?) and Preton(?) and trampled three thousand Jews to death under their horses' hooves. And they did it in the name of Christianity.

In 1254 Louis IX banished them from France. In 1306 Philip the Fair expelled 100 thousand of them from the same country. During the scourge of the Black Death in 1348 and 1349 the charge was made that the Black Death or the Great Plague was caused by the Jews who had poisoned the wells and they endeavored to slaughter the Jews and many of them fled to Poland and to Russia.

In 1492 the Jews were expelled from Spain as Columbus was heading to discover America. In 1496 they were expelled from Portugal. Soon after all of western Europe was closed to them except a few spots in northern Italy and Germany, toward the middle of the seventeenth century in Poland, more

persecution broke out. And though the French Revolution tended to emancipate some of the European Jews around 1789 or so, Anti-Semitism continued in many areas and particularly in the Ukraine early in the 1800's there were massacres of Jews.

I think we all remember the nineteenth century Dreyfus affair in which Dreyfus, a Jewish officer, was accused of treason. And an attempt began to oust the Jews from all the higher ranks of the French army. Their only hope for preservation really was the rebirth of Zionism. And it did happen and it rallied the Jewish people so that in 1897 they held their first Zionist congress in Bazel(?). The first little colony of Zionists returned to the land in about 1873 and by 1914 there were 90 thousand Jews in their land, though it wasn't yet their land. Their identity had been miraculously preserved through this incredible series of massacres through all of the years of their existence.

And, of course, it all came to a horrifying climax in the 1940's when six million of them were systematically exterminated. And anti-Semitism was no longer racial as it had been in the Middle Ages, it was...rather no longer religious as it had been in the Middle Ages but it became racial. So that the legacy of all of that today in the world is not that we have a religious anti-Semitism but we still have what is left of a racial anti-Semitism. And Jewish people today find themselves in many cases to be hated, to be slandered, to be defamed, to be misunderstood, to be mocked.

And I give you all of that just to help answer that question, what advantage then hath the Jew? Frankly, historically there is little advantage at all, if any. From the historical perspective the answer would be no advantage. But Paul is not really dealing in terms of history. So take it to a second category, what about spiritual advantage? Do they have a spiritual advantage? Do they have an in with God that nobody else has? Do they have a security with God that no one else has? After all, they are the chosen people.

The answer to that question is found in the last section of chapter 2 and the answer to that question is there's no advantage at all spiritually. You say, "What do you mean?" I mean that just being a Jew and being a member of the chosen people of God is no spiritual advantage, necessarily. Verse 29, "For a true Jew is a true Jew inwardly." That's Paul's message.

The heritage, being born of the seed of Abraham, the legacy of the law, the sign of circumcision which is the mark of the Jew, those things bring no salvation. They offer no spiritual security. And that is the bubble that Paul bursts, didn't he, in chapter 2. For the tendency of the Jew was to hold on to his Abrahamic heritage, to hold on to his possession of the law of God, and to hold on to his sign, the sign of circumcision which marked him out as the covenant people and to believe that because he had those things he was therefore given spiritual exemption from condemnation. In other words, he was not really accountable for the evil he had done simply because he was a member of the right people. And that isn't the case, Paul says, and we saw that from verse 17 through 29. Spiritually speaking the Jew really has no advantage. In fact, because he has been given the privilege of

knowing so much and receiving so much from God, if he refused to make it personal in his life and become one inwardly, he is at great disadvantage because to whom much is given, much is required. And to whom much is required there's much greater condemnation.

And so, the question could be answered no, there's no advantage historically, look at all they've gone through. There's no advantage spiritually because just because you're Jewish doesn't necessarily guarantee you redemption. And so we're right where we want to be then in chapter 3 and let's ask the question again. What advantage then hath the Jew? Or, what profit is there in circumcision? Is there any advantage at all?

Now, let's back up in our thinking for a moment. Remember that Romans presents the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. That's what it presents. And the first part of the good news is what? Bad news...bad news first then good news. And the bad news is that man is a sinner and man is condemned by God for his sin. That is the theme of chapters 1, 2 and 3. The good news begins in the middle of chapter 3 and stretches on really for the remainder of the epistle. But before you hear the good news, you have to understand the bad news, it's sort of like this, you can't take the cure until you realize you've got the disease.

And so, to begin with the Apostle Paul points out that man is sinful and therefore under condemnation. And in chapter 1 he condemned the immoral, irreligious, pagan individual who just lives the wild and free and loose kind of life style with little regard for law and order in a moral way or God or anything else. And we pretty well could agree with that, that that kind of person who lives a dissolute dissipated vile sinful life with no regard for moral standards is condemned.

But then in chapter 2 he began to talk about the moral man who is ethical, who may even be religious. And he shows how that man is condemned because by his morality and by his religion he cannot attain the perfect standard of God. And then the third category beginning in chapter 2 verse 17 was the Jew who not only was moral and religious but even had the right religion. And he says, first of all, you're condemned if your irreligious. Secondly, you can be condemned if you're even religious if you're depending on your religion to save you. And you can even be condemned if you have the right religion if you're still depending only on its form rather than the knowledge of God.

And so, he has condemned the Jew. And he has condemned the moralist. And he has condemned the pagan. And he has destroyed all of men's securities, all of men's convenient hiding places, he has ripped off the covers and left them naked and condemned.

Now he's just finished up with the Jew in the end of chapter 2 and he's shown how that you can be Jewish and be lost. You can be part of the covenant people and be lost. You can have the law of God and be lost. You can have the sign of circumcision and be lost unless you personalize your relationship to God and it's a relationship with a heart.

Well after having all of his securities blown to ribbons, Paul knows that the Jew is going to ask some very hard questions, or point out some very very strong objections. And that is precisely what we have in verses 1 through 8. Paul has torn all the securities and confidences apart and the Jewish person who reads this letter or hears his message is going to then say, "Paul, if this is true, if being the seed of Abraham and possessing the law of God and having the sign of the covenant circumcision, if that does not secure me, then what advantage is it to be Jewish? If it doesn't mean anything that I'm a child of Abraham and it doesn't mean anything that I have received the law, and it doesn't mean anything that I have been circumcised, then what good is it to be Jewish?"

Now he knows that's the question they're going to ask because he's had personal experience at it. You won't assume for a moment, will you, that when he wrote the epistle to the Romans he was saying things he never said before. Oh, he had preached this message many times, I'm quite sure, and he had gotten these reactions many times as well. So he knew well how the Jewish person would react. And basically he gives three reactions and this is a tremendous passage for us to understand this interplay.

There's a threepart objection. Now Paul knows it's going to come so he just plays the role of the devil's advocate and gives these three objectives and then answers them. And basically, you know what the Jew is going to say? The Jew is going to say, "Paul, you are attacking God." That's what he's going to say. "You can't teach that kind of stuff, you can't tell us that we don't have a special place with God, you can't tell us that we aren't uniquely set apart unto Him. You can't tell us that without striking a blow at the character of God."

And this is what the Jew would say. You have attacked God's people, that's number one. You have attacked God's promise, that's number two. And you have attacked God's purity, that's number three. And they accuse Paul of attacking God. By the way, they did that a lot. Do you remember in the book of Acts when he went into, chapter 21, he went into the city of Jerusalem? And he was coming to try to identify himself there with the love of the Gentiles bringing that gift to the Jewish church and he also wanted to go to the temple to worship with some of his Jewish acquaintances. And when he came there the Jew said, "This is the man...well, let me read it to you, Acts 21:28, and you get it straight from the Word...This is the man...I got the first four words right, let's follow it..."that teacheth all men everywhere against the people and the law and this place it was the temple and further hath brought Greeks into the temple and polluted the holy place."

Now what did they say? This is the man that speaks against the people, he speaks against the law, and he speaks against the holy place. Did you get that? Write those down. He speaks against the people, against the law, against the holy place. You see, that was the kind of accusation that Paul had endured repeatedly. Whenever he would say no, your Jewishness will not save you any more than my being in a church necessarily saves me, or you're being a Presbyterian or a Baptist or an

Episcopalian or a Catholic or anything else saves you...it isn't what you identify with externally, and so when he would come and say all of this means nothing unless there's a change in your heart, they would say to him, "You're speaking against the law and against the people and against the holy place."

Now those are very important things. The people, the law, and his holiness, or the holy place....because those are the same three issues Paul brings up here. You will accuse me of speaking against God's people. Secondly, God's promises in His law. And thirdly, God's purity. He knew that this experience was common in his dealing with Jews. Now they're against the ropes, frankly, and he knows they're going to fight their way out. This is an inevitable reaction.

Let's look at objection number one. First of all, he says the Jew does, this is the Jew that Paul is sort of playing in this little role "What advantage then hath the Jew, or what profit is there of circumcision?" In other words, if our heritage and our law and our covenant sign, circumcision, give us no advantage, then being a Jew means absolutely nothing. There's no benefit in Jewishness. And if there's no benefit in Jewishness, then what you're saying is that God's called people aren't special. And if that's the case, you're speaking against God's people. We're nothing special. You see, they believed that they were so special that they could be irresponsible and complacent and selfsatisfied and indulgent and God was obligated to save them because they were Jewish. That's what they believed. And so they're saying if you say this then being Jewish means nothing. In fact, the privileges of the Jew serve only to increase his condemnation and Jewishness would be more of a liability than an asset. In fact in chapter 2 verse 27 he even said that Jews would be condemned by Gentiles and that is really shocking. I mean, what good is it to be Jewish if we're going to get condemned by Gentiles?

You see, the underlying question is the integrity of God. The underlying question is the credibility of God, that is the issue. They're saying, "Paul, you strike a blow at the character of God. God has called out His people and God has ordained them to noble purposes, but you're denying those noble intents." Now to the Jew this seems totally inconsistent with God's purpose in choosing His people.

And, of course, many Scriptures would enter the mind of the Jew. Deuteronomy 10:14 and 15, verse 15 says, "Yet on your fathers did the Lord set His affection to love them and He chose their descendants after them, even you, above all peoples." And they would go back and say, "You see, we've been chosen above all peoples." Deuteronomy 14:2, "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."

And they would remember Exodus 19 and verse 6 which says, "And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." And they would remember Isaiah 43:21, "The people whom I formed for Myself will declare My praise." And Psalm 135 verse 4, "For the Lord hath chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His own possession." And they would say God has separated us out of all other people for

His own holy purposes and now you say being Jewish is nothing. It's reminiscent of Esau when he said, "I am about to die, what good is this birthright?" It doesn't mean anything if I'm condemned.

So, what good is our Judaism if in itself it doesn't save us from sin? It doesn't save us from condemnation. It doesn't offer some advantage over the heathen. And, you see, the reason they even ask the question is because they believe that their national identity marks them out for salvation.

Look at Paul's answer in verse 2. What is the advantage to being Jewish? Here it is, "Much every way," and you can stop there. There are many advantages. They're not necessarily historical and they're not necessarily spiritual because it certainly didn't provide much protection for them through their history and it didn't provide salvation for them. Well what is the advantage? O, much every way.

If you go back in the Old Testament, you will read repeatedly of the tremendous and consistent blessing of God upon that people. But I think it is best summed up in the ninth chapter of Romans where Paul speaks about the same issue later on. Look over to chapter 9 verse 4. Paul's talking about Israel and Israel's need of Christ and how much he wishes they would know Christ. And then he begins to speak about their privileges. He says in verse 4, who are Israelites, "To whom pertaineth the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the service of God and the promises whose are the fathers and of whom is concerning the flesh, Christ came." What advantage? Many advantages. You've been the ones who are adopted as God's special people. You've received the glory. What is that? The very Shekinah glory of God led them by day, led them by night, was in the midst of their holy places. You have received the covenants, Abrahamic, Davidic, Mosaic, Palestinian, all of those. You have been given the law. Yours has been the service of God through the priests and the prophets. You have received the promises, yours are the fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and Joseph. And yours is the Christ. Much much privilege.

They were marks of God's care, they were marks of God's concern. They were marks of God's love. They were aids to their deliverance from sin. They were instructions for the blessing of the Holy Spirit. God gave them all of these things and they just never really lived up to what they possessed. Great advantage, great privilege, great priority, great preeminence was given to the people of Israel but they wasted it. They had the privilege of proclaiming the true God. They had the privilege of revealing the Messiah. They had the privilege of blessing from God as they served faithfully. They had the privilege of a land. They had a privilege of an ultimate restoration and glory in the final Kingdom. They had all of these privileges.

You see, Amos 3:2, I think, sums it up wonderfully. The prophet Amos said, listen carefully, "You only have I known of all families of the earth." That is a beautiful statement. It doesn't mean that the only people God knows about intellectually are Jews, He really knows about everybody. But the word "know" is a word of intimacy. For example, it says in the New Testament of the Lord and the church, "I know My sheep." What does He mean? Well, He means there is more than just an awareness

there's an intimacy. You see, Joseph was upset when Mary was with child because the Bible says he had never...what?...known her. It didn't mean he didn't know who she was. He had never entered into an intimate relationship physically with her.

You find it in the Old Testament where it talks about Cain knew his wife and she bore a child. It is the knowing of intimacy. And so Amos 3:2 says you only have I entered into intimacy with of all the nations of the earth. That's privilege. But they never understood the rest of the verse. Same verse, Amos 3:2 says, "Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities," see. High privilege, high responsibility.

Look at Matthew chapter 22...Matthew chapter 22, verse 1, "And Jesus answered and spoke unto them again by parables and said, The Kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who made a marriage for his son." And, of course, in the parable the king is God and the son is Christ. "Sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding and they would not come." Guess who that is? That's Israel. "Again he sent forth other servants saying, Tell them who are bidden, behold, I have prepared my dinner, my ox and my fatlings are killed and all things are ready, come unto the marriage. They made light of it, they went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise and the rest of them took the servants and treated them shamefully and slew them." Jesus told them one time that they were guilty of killing the prophets.

"And when the king heard of it he was angry and sent forth his armies and destroyed the murderers and burned up their city." Humph...that's precisely what happened in 70 A.D., by the way. "Then he said to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they who were bidden were not worthy, go therefore into the highways and as many as you shall find, bid to the marriage. So the servants went out into the highways and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good, and the wedding was furnished with guests."

Where did the guests come from? Well I think that's the church, that's those who would come. And the parable is very simple. Israel had the privilege but Israel never lived up to the privilege.

And so they lost out on the blessing.

Go back to Romans 3 now. They were privileged. In fact in Isaiah 5 God says, "What more could I have done for My people that I have not done?" What more could I have done? And the answer is nothing. They were privileged in so many ways but in disobedience they wasted the privilege. They're a little different than many people in the church today who have a great privilege but never commit their heart to Jesus Christ and tragically they waste...they waste inestimable privilege.

But let's go on to verse 2 and see the latter part. What advantage then has the Jew? Paul, you're really attacking the people of God with your theology. He says no, you have a great advantage in



every way but chiefly...and here it comes...primarily because unto them were committed the words of God. Their greatest advantage simply their foremost advantage, their primary advantage was they received the Word of God. That's the greatest advantage anybody can have, isn't it? For where there's no knowledge people perish. But they had the knowledge.

In Deuteronomy 4 God said to them, "See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the Lord my God commanded me that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. So keep them and do them for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." You have all the statutes, you have all the commandments and the judgments, keep them.

In Deuteronomy 6, "And these words which I am commanding you today shall be on your heart. Teach them diligently to your sons, talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, when you lie down, when you rise up, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, they shall be frontals on your forehead and you shall write them on the doorpost of your house and on your gates." God gave them His Word.

The Scriptures were entrusted to the Jews. You would have thought that they would have absolutely cherished that, but as you read the Old Testament you find there were times in their history when they couldn't even find the Scripture, they didn't even know where it was. And when somebody would discover it and bring it out, it would be something that was a marvel because that which was lost for so long had finally been found.

God's authentic selfrevelation was committed as a trust to them to treasure and then to proclaim to the world. And the Word really says in verse 2, "Unto them were entrusted..." but they weren't trustworthy. William Calper(?) wrote, "They and they only amongst all mankind received the transcript of the eternal mind, were trusted with His own engraven laws and constituted guardians of His cause. Theirs were the prophets and theirs the priestly call, and theirs by birth the Savior of us all."

What advantage? You have the Word of God. They paid no attention to it on the one hand and on the other hand they absolutely smothered it in their tradition. They just overpowered it with all of their own manmade traditions.

Now what about that term "oracles?" It's kind of an interesting term. The oracles of God, I don't know what ever gets into these King James translators periodically when they do this. It's the word...it's John's word logos in a different form, logia, it's just the word "Word." And they throw oracles. And I don't know how that hits you but I think of something that is occult..oracle is a word that came from pagan occult religion. They used to use...they used to consult mediums and wizards and demons and oracles who would speak. You know, they used to go for their oracles. For example, they would look at the movements of fish in a tank. You think that's bizarre? How about stars in the heaven? Same

thing. Horoscope. They would throw snakes in a pit and like looking at tea leaves in the bottom of a teacup they would watch the formation of the snakes. They would listen to the whistle of the wind in the trees and that would determine oracles and pronouncements and so forth.

One of their very most common ways was to listen to the birds. And there were special people who were bird listeners. And they would go out and as they would hear the birds communicating they would be able to tell what it was that they should do. For example, the religious ceremony would only begin when the bird listener said it was time to start. Bird listeners were called augurs, those are two Latin words put together that means bird talk. We use the word today. We say we inaugurate the President. That's from that old thing. In other words, the bird talk says it's time to do this. That's how that word has come down through history. When the augurs said everything was favorable, the ceremonies began and so eventually something was inaugurated, it began.

They used to watch how birds flew and they'd watch the configurations of the birds and they'd say, "Aha, it's okay, we can do it now because the flight is right." That ancient Latin word is auspices. Now we say something is presented under the auspices of....it really goes way back to that pagan concept that the flight of the birds indicate that this is the right thing to do. And today we have people still reading livers and entrails of animals and cutting cards and tossing coins and reading tea leaves and horoscopes and dreams and visions. That's not what we're talking about here, folks. So when you see the word "oracle" just cross it out and write "words." In fact if you want to really be accurate, write "Scriptures."

What the Jews received were not a lot of occultic hocus pocus things, but the words of God, the very words of God. By the way, the same Greek term is used in Acts 7:38 and it refers to the Scripture and calls it the living oracles. And 1 Peter 4:11 says, "When you speak, speak the oracles of God." And there it's the same term again, logia, it simply means the Word of God, the Scripture. And may I just add as a footnote here that Scripture is the Word of God. What was committed to the Jew was not the word of man, it was the Word of God. You understand that. That is critical. What the Jews have is not the word of man it is the Word of God. And part of the tragedy today is that the conservative and the reformed Jews don't even believe the Old Testament is the Word of God. And the orthodox have got so much other stuff in their traditions that you can't find the Word of God in there. And they have literally denied or drowned their greatest legacy. By the way, the Bible claims at least two thousand six hundred times to be the Word of God.

Now, parallel to this, I think, is today. Many people like these Jews think that they belong to a church. They do some religious activities. They're going to be okay. And if you tell them well, you're not okay. I mean, just being in a church isn't going to do it. They're going to say, "Well, then what is the advantage to being in the church if that doesn't save us?" And the answer is much advantage, you get to be with the best people in the world to start with. But most of all, you get to hear...what?...the Word of God. That's the highest privilege there is. That's why in 1 Corinthians chapter 7 it says that if

a believing wife has an unbelieving husband, and that unbelieving husband wants to stay married to her, she should keep him and hold on because he is sanctified by her very presence. In other words, he receives benefit by just being where God is blessing her, it will spill on to him. There's a lot of advantages to being in the church and just being by folks who get blessed but the chief advantage is the Word of God. That's their advantage.

Second objection comes in verse 3. Look what they say. "For what if some did not believe, so what if some didn't believe?" And by the way, the Jew here would be very generous because it wasn't some that didn't believe, it was..what?..most, but what if some didn't believe, "Shall their unbelief...or really you could read it this way...what if some were not trustworthy, shall their untrustworthiness make God untrustworthy?" What is this saying? This is saying, okay, God made promises. God made covenants. God told us He would bless us. He gave us the promise in Abraham that we would be multiplied as the sand of the sea and we would be blessed and so forth. He gave us the promise through David that we would inherit a Kingdom and a King and all of these wonderful promises through Isaiah that there would come a time of refreshing, etc., etc. And because we have not believed, has then God cancelled His promises? Listen, Paul, you are speaking against the promises of God.

And so they accused Paul of speaking against the law of God, the Word of God, the promise of God. And it really ties. You say our great privilege is the Word and you're speaking against it. You're saying that because we didn't believe and we didn't accept that Word internally, that God just cancelled all of His promises. And that makes us unfaithful and causes God then to be unfaithful.

So, shall the unbelief of the Jew make the faithfulness of God ineffective? What they're saying is this is God who is not going to grant salvation to His people based on their heritage, and their ceremonies, and so forth. If He doesn't then He's unfaithful. You are striking a blow at the faithfulness of God. One, you're saying He had nothing in mind when He chose us. And, two, you're saying His promises are meaningless.

Now that's a pretty serious attack. God breaks His promises. That's why you see in Acts 21 they said, "This man speaks against the law, he speaks against the Word of God. He denies that God will keep His promise." And, you see, of course, they thought in their own perverted selfcentered thinking that God made all these promises and no matter what they did, God would just pour out blessing abundant and save them no matter what they did. And that was never ever the intention that God had.

But this is an attack, they say, on the character of God. "Has not God promised to be a God to Abraham and his seed? Has not God entered a solemn covenant to grant His people the blessings and benefits of the Messiah's Kingdom? Have we not accepted Abraham as our father? Have we not taken the sign of circumcision to identify with the covenant? Is not therefore God obligated to keep His side of the bargain? And even though some of us don't believe, does that mean God's going to

cancel all His promises?"

Well that's very important to understand what they're saying, isn't it? You see, this is reminiscent of the ritualists in Christianity today who say, "I'm okay, I've been baptized. I mean, just because I've goofed up a little bit here and there, I mean, God's going to be faithful. After all, I went through the ritual. I joined the church. I signed the card. I got the baptism." So they really accused Paul of attacking God's promises. And therefore they're attacking...therefore he is attacking God's fidelity, God's character.

Watch his answer in verse 5, or verse 4 rather, it says in the English "God forbid" but the Greek says me genoito, which is the strongest negative the Greek language knows. What it says simply in English is, "No, no, no, no, no way. Could never be, utterly impossible. Can't be." What can't be? God can't break His word, He can't break His promise. It's impossible. The unbelief of some does not bring to naught the faithfulness of God. And he just makes that statement...no, no, no, no, no, no. And he doesn't here go into explain how...listen to this...some day God is going to keep His covenants with Israel, He's going to do that. And don't you think for a minute He isn't. I believe that's the error of contemporary reformed covenant theology, they don't see any place for Israel. Listen, if there's no place for Israel then this argument is right, God did cancel all His promises. And I can't handle that. Because Paul says no, no, no, no, no. All God did was postpone their fulfillment until Israel finally gets their act together and believes. And Zechariah says some day they will look on Him whom they have pierced and they will mourn for Him as an only son. And in that day God will open a fountain of salvation to Israel. Their day is future. And by the way, that is Romans 9, 10 and 11, he'll get to that later. It will be postponed until faith comes.

In fact, in chapter 11, I could just read you one little section and you get the whole picture. Listen to this. "Hath God cast away His people?" Romans 11:1, "No, no, no, no, no, no, he says, me genoito, same phrase. No. He's not going to cast them away, not at all. Verse 26, "All Israel shall be saved. There shall come out of Zion the deliverer and turn away ungodliness from Jacob for this is My covenant." God will keep it but it will be future when they believe. It's just postponed.

National salvation, yes that will come to the people of Israel but these people missed personal salvation and so do all other Jews who will not believe in Christ. So Paul resists any suggestion at all that God's going to be unfaithful. In fact, he says...look at this in verse 4, I think it's interesting..."Let God be true and every man a liar." Listen. What does that mean? If every single person in the world said God is not true, He's still true. If every man in the world speaks evil about God, if every man in the world says God doesn't keep His Word, God is still true. God is true if every man in the world says He's not true. The integrity of God must be upheld.

Then he uses a marvelous illustration. It's a tremendous one. "As it is written," and he calls the Scripture to his support, Psalm 51:4, "that Thou, speaking to God, Thoucapital Tmightest be justified

in Thy capital Tsayings and mightest overcome when Thou art condemned, as it were." In other words, no matter who speaks against You, God, You will overcome no matter who wants to criticize or speak evil, You will be justified in everything You say. God will be vindicated. God will be justified. God's character will be upheld. And he quotes out of Psalm 51 verse 4.

Now that's an interesting passage. And I think I'll just refer to it and then we'll stop and do the rest next time. But listen carefully to that passage. And I want to spend just a few minutes on this. David was the king. And David was, of course, the greatest person in the history of Israel. And so he quotes David because whenever you quote David you really pull a coup in terms of a debate with a Jew. And so he quotes David. And this is what happened in David's life.

David was up on his roof and he looked over on somebody else's roof and there was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah sunbathing. And he just hung around and kept looking. And he really liked what he saw. So he decided that he would commit adultery with her and when he committed adultery with her, he not only did that, but he impregnated her. And then he decided to marry her but in order to marry her he had to get rid of her husband so he worked out a way in which Uriah would be killed. So he was an adulterer and a murderer.

And in the midst of all of this the Lord sent Nathan the prophet and then Nathan the prophet comes in and he says, "David, I want to tell you a story." He said there was a rich man who went to a poor man and the poor man only had one little ewe lamb. And the rich man took that ewe lamb away from the poor man. And David said, "Nathan, as the Lord lives, whatever man you're telling me about deserves to die." And Nathan looked him in the eye and said, "You're the man." And David said, "O, I have sinned against the Lord." And God punished David. That little baby that was born of that union died. There was death continually among David's other children. His Son Absalom over whom he cried, "Absalom, Absalom, Absalom, my son, my son, my son," turned to be a rebel and literally sought to his own father's life to steal his throne. He lived a life of pain. He spent his time running and hiding from Absalom and his enemies, from bush to bush in the wilderness and crying out in the caves to God to deliver him.

But in all of that David would still say, "God, You are justified in everything You say and everything You do and when somebody tries to impugn You, or speak evil against You, You will triumph." In other words, he was simply saying no matter what God does, it is right even if it is to punish the king. So don't you ever impugn God's Word. If God makes a promise, He'll keep it. If God appears to be unjust, He's being just because the punishment is deserved. God always is just. In other words, David upheld the character of God and that's why Paul quotes David. David would never so speak against God. David would never impugn the character of God. David will not say God is unfair or God is unkind, God is unjust...he would say, "God, I've deserved everything You've given me." Even David acknowledged that God was without flaw. In spite of David's sin, God will fulfill the Davidic covenant, He did in the coming of Messiah. In spite of Israel's sin, God will ultimately fulfill the Abrahamic

covenant. God's Word is true. God's true is valid. God's character can always be upheld.

So, the Jew is going to say, "Your theology attacks the people of God." Paul says no, no, no, no, no, you still have great advantage in every way, chiefly the Scripture. But what good is the Scripture, says the Jew, if our unbelief cancels it? No, he says, God doesn't break His promises, just realize that it's yet future. He'll say in Romans 9 to 11. And the illustration is that even David who was chastened and punished yet received the promise and upheld God's character. And that is a tremendous statement because when somebody becomes the victim of God's chastening to the degree that David did, and I mean it was unbelievable, it was life long and it was excruciating and he was getting hit as close as you can be hit right in your own family, with your entire family turning against you and becoming rebellious toward God. I mean, it was extremely painful. And yet he never one time impugned God, "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight." God, You're just. You will overcome when anybody tries to condemn You. So don't you ever ever believe for a moment that God does an unjust, unkind, untrue act or in any way breaks His word.

There's a third objection. We're going to look at that next week. Remember what the Jews said when Paul went into the temple in Acts 21? They said, "This man speaks against the people, the law and this holy place." The Jew will next say, "You've attacked God's holiness." And he gives a most fascinating argument. We know it today as the end justifies the means and we're going to see next time how Paul answers that argument. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we know that the gospel is hard sometimes for people to accept because it makes them face their sin. The irreligious and immoral person has to face the fact of condemnation from a holy God, even the religious moral person has to face the fact of condemnation because his morality and religion can't reach to the perfect standard and he becomes selfdeluded. And even the Jew is left out if he counts strictly on his national identity and his physical sign because it's a matter of the heart. And this, Father, is not an attack on Your people. They've had great advantage. They've had Your Word. And we think about that even now in the church. So many people sit in churches and they think the church is going to save them. But it won't. It will just make more severe their condemnation because they knew so much and didn't personally respond. Does that mean there's no privilege in the church? No, there is a privilege and that is to hear the Word of God. And God will not break His Word. He will not break His promise. He will be justified in all that He says and He will triumph over those who would condemn Him. God has a special place for His people. They possess His Word and He has a special commitment to His promise, He will fulfill it to those who believe.

Father, we pray that we might hear with hearing ears this message, that we might know that to know Thee is a personal decision in response to the working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts that we individually within must receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and then we enter the fullest advantage and the fullness of all the promises.

Just in the closing moment while your heads are bowed, I trust that you can thank the Lord in your heart for His Word tonight. What a treasure. How thrilling it is to know the truth. And I trust that you can thank God, too, for Christ who has saved you. If you can't, ask God to open your heart and show you His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, do Your work in every heart and accept our praise and thanks for such a blessed evening as we've shared for Christ's sake. Amen.

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